

**METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR AUTHENTICATING A USER
AT AN ACCESS TERMINAL**

5 **Technical Field**

This invention relates to network security.

Background of the Invention

Before a user is permitted to access a network resource or service
10 provided on a network computer or server through a remote terminal, a
network security program or application running on that computer or server, or
on a separate computer or server, will generally first determine whether the
user is a person who is entitled to access that resource or service. If he is,
the network security program or application will attempt to authenticate that
15 person as being the authorized person. Most commonly, the identity aspect
is determined through a comparison of a user-inputted account name or
identity with the account names or identities of those who are entitled to
access the resource or service. If the user-inputted identity or account name
is valid, authentication is then generally performed by requiring the user to
20 input a PIN or password that is associated with that identified user and known
only to the user and to network security program or application. In many
instances, the user will enter both his identity or account name and his PIN or
password in two separate fields of a dialog box of a graphical user interface
page, for example a WWW page, in order to access a resource or service

available on the Internet or some other data network. The network security program or application will allow access to the network resource or service only if the user is able to provide the PIN or password that is uniquely associated with his identity or account name; otherwise, access is denied.

- 5 This type of interaction is common through terminals such as ATMs (Automatic Teller Machines), laptops, workstations, as well as any other type of landline wired or wireless terminal in which network access is attempted.

As long as a user's PIN or password remains secure, prior art methods of maintaining security using IDs or account names and PINs or passwords

- 10 have been found to be for the most part satisfactory. A user's PIN or password, however, may be compromised by carelessness on the user's part. For example, a user might notate his ATM card with his PIN number or keep that PIN in his wallet with the ATM card. If the user loses that card or wallet, or if the user's card or wallet is stolen, the finder or thief could have ready
- 15 access the user's bank account. Similarly, a careless user might leave his PIN or password in plain view near his office terminal, allowing unfettered access by an "eavesdropper" to confidential network resources.

- 20 An additional mechanism for authenticating a user would thus be useful to protect access to a restricted network resource or service in order to reduce the likelihood of an unauthorized access by an illegitimate user.

Summary of the Invention

In accordance with an embodiment of the present invention, secure access to a network resource running on a computer or server, is provided by

a method that compares the current physical location of a network access terminal through which a user is attempting to access the network resource, and the current physical location of the user who is authorized to access the network resource. If the locations are different, then access is denied.

- 5 In an embodiment of the invention, the physical location of the authorized user is determined by determining the location of a registered mobile terminal that the authorized user is likely to have on or near his person. Such physical location can be determined in response to a location request that is sent to that mobile terminal, which can determine its current
- 10 physical location using, for example, an internal GPS transceiver or a triangulation methodology. Alternatively, in response to a request received on the access terminal, the user can send a message from that mobile terminal that includes the identity of the registered mobile terminal and its current location to an address that has been specified in the received request. The
- 15 current physical location of the network access terminal through which access to the network resource or service is being attempted is determined by sending a location request to the terminal, which is equipped with a location-determining device, such as a GPS transceiver, or through a database lookup of such location if the access terminal is located at a fixed location, for
- 20 example, an ATM. Only if the determined location of the authorized user's registered mobile terminal is the same or within a predetermined range of the location of the terminal through which access is being attempted, is the user granted access to the network resource; otherwise, access is denied.

Bri f Description of th Drawing

The present invention will be better understood from reading the following description of non-limiting embodiments, with reference to the attached drawings, wherein below:

- 5 FIG. 1 is a block diagram showing a network incorporating an embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 2 is a flowchart showing the steps of an embodiment of the present invention.

10 **Detailed Description**

With reference to FIG. 1, using an access terminal 101, a user 102 accesses a network resource or service 103 that is provided on a network computer or server 104, which is connected to a data network 105. Data network 105 can be any type of data network, as for example, an IP network such as the Internet. It can also be any other type of data network running an appropriate protocol. Access terminal 101 can be directly and permanently connected to the network 105, such as an ATM through which the user 102 is able to conduct financial transactions such as withdrawing cash from his bank account. Alternatively, access terminal 101 can be a workstation or a portable device, such as a laptop computer, which is not permanently and directly connected to the network 105, but rather is connected via another network (not shown), such as the landline Public Switched Telephone Network using either a voice-band modem or over a DSL connection, a cable network, a satellite network, or a wireless network.

Regardless of how and over what type of network or networks the connection between terminal 101 and computer or server 104 is established, the user 102 in order to be granted access the desired network resource or service 103 available on computer or server 104 establishes his presence by

5 providing his identity or account name (commonly to be referred to hereinafter in the description and in the claims as the user's ID) to a network security application or program 106 running on the same computer or server 104 or on a different computer or server. Only when user 102 is authenticated by network security application or program 106, is access to the desired network.

10 resource or service 103 granted. Generally a network security application or program authenticates a user by comparing the user-inputted ID with a user-inputted PIN or password (commonly to be referred to hereinafter in the description and in the claims as the user's PIN) that is known only to the user and is stored in association with the user's ID in a database 107 that is

15 associated with computer or server 104. If the user-inputted PIN matches the PIN that is stored in database 107 in association with the user's ID, access is granted, and if it doesn't, access is denied. Absent any further authentication mechanism, a network security system that uses only an ID and a PIN for identifying and authenticating a user has no way of determining whether the

20 identity of the user who is attempting access is in fact the actual authorized user. Thus, if the secrecy of a user's PIN is intentionally or accidentally compromised, a network security system will be unable to deny access to any user who is able to provide the authorized user's ID and PIN. Whereas some sophisticated security systems are able to authenticate a person attempting

access to a secured facility by analyzing the person's physiognomic characteristics, such as fingerprints or iris patterns, such sophisticated techniques would be extremely costly and difficult to implement at a typical user-computer access terminal such as an ATM or a workstation.

- 5 In this described embodiment of the present invention, an additional layer of network security is provided that reduces the likelihood that the person attempting to access the network resource or service 103 available on computer or server 104 is not an authorized user. Specifically, the current physical location of access terminal 101 is compared with the current physical
- 10 10 location of the authorized user whose ID has been provided by user 102 to the network security program or application 106 running on computer or server 104. If the determined current location of the actual authorized user matches the determined location of terminal 101, then access to network resource or service 103 is granted based on the likely to be true assumption
- 15 15 that if the authorized user is physically at the location of terminal 101, then the user who is attempting access is in fact the authorized user. If, on the other hand, the authorized user is not at the same location as access terminal 101, then the user who is attempting access is not the authorized user, and access is denied.
- 20 Authentication of the user commences with an access request through access terminal 101 for the network resource or service 103 provided by computer or server 104. The procedure of the access request generally first consists of obtaining the ID of user 102 via a user interface provided at access terminal 101, where the user interface is typically audio/graphical, but

- does not need to be restricted to that type of interface. It then consists of routing this request from access terminal 101 over data network 105 to the network security program or application 106. In the case of a fixed access terminal, such as an ATM, the request procedure involves obtaining the
- 5 identity of access terminal 101 so that it can be provided to the network security program or application 106 in addition to the ID of user 102. Initiating the request by invocation of the user interface can take the form of entering a URL on a user's browser at an access terminal such as a laptop or a workstation. At an ATM, that request can be initiated by inputting an ATM
- 10 card or credit card in an appropriate slot. Either directly through the inputting of the ATM or credit card, which each have the authorized user's identity embedded in its magnetic strip, or through a responsive request to provide his identity, the user 102 provides either his ID in some manner from which the network security program or application 106 determines whether the provided
- 15 ID is associated with an authorized user. In most instances the user 102 will also be asked to provide, either in conjunction with his ID or separately, the PIN that is associated with that ID, which is used by the network security program or application 106 as a first level of authentication of user 102.

The second layer of authentication, which is the subject of the present

20 invention, is made by comparing a determined current physical location of the access terminal 101 with a current determined physical location of the authorized user who is associated in database 107 with the ID provided by user 102. The physical location of access terminal 101 is determined by identifying that access terminal and then using that identity to determine

where terminal 101 is currently located. The identity of access terminal 101 can be incorporated into the initial request made through access terminal 101 to computer or server 104, or in conjunction with a subsequent response to a request for the user's identity and/or PIN. If access terminal 101 is in a fixed location, such as if it is an ATM, then database 107 has the physical location of that terminal stored in association its identity. Thus, if the physical location is not stored in database 107 in association with the identity of terminal 101, then network security application or program 104 sends a location query to access terminal 101 using a protocol that ensures a secure exchange of information. If not at a permanent location, access terminal 101 is equipped with a location-determining device, such as a GPS transceiver 108. In response to the location query transmitted by computer or server 104 over the data network 105 to the identified access terminal 101, access terminal queries GPS transceiver 108 to determine its current physical location. That location is responsively transmitted back by access terminal 101 to network security program or application 106.

Either before, coincident with, or after transmitting the location query to access terminal 101, a location query is transmitted by network security program 106 to determine the physical location of the authorized user associated with the provided user's ID. In order to determine the current location of the authorized user, the location of a mobile terminal 109 that is associated with that authorized user is determined. Such a mobile terminal 109 will need to be on the user's person or nearby when the user attempts to access the network resource or service 104 that is so protected by the

network security program or application that incorporates the present invention. Thus, the identity of that mobile terminal 109, such as its cellular phone number, is registered by the authorized user and stored in database 107 in association with the authorized user's ID.

- 5 When user 102 provides his ID, therefore, database 107 is accessed to determine the identity of the authorized user's mobile terminal 109, and network security program or application 106 initiates a location query to that identified mobile terminal 109 to determine its current location. Gateway 110, interconnecting computer or server 104 and wireless network 111 functions to
- 10 translate between the protocols used on data network 105 and the protocols used on wireless network 111. Using its phone-number identity, mobile terminal 109 is located within the coverage area 113 of a particular base station 114. Using a secure protocol that establishes the identity and authorization of such a query, a location query is transmitted to mobile
- 15 terminal 109 using a mechanism similar to that of SMS for carrying the query as a short data message. The secure signaling protocol could be incorporated in the SS7 network, but is not restricted to the SS7 network protocols. Mobile terminal 109, running a software program that is adapted to receive a location query and respond thereto, determines its current physical
- 20 location through an internal or externally connected GPS transceiver 116 or using triangulation from plural base stations, in a well-known manner. The determined current physical location information of mobile terminal 109 is transmitted back over the wireless network 111 and through gateway 110 to

the network security program or application 106 using, for example, the SMS mechanism for transmitting a short data message over the SS7 network.

Network security program or application 106 then compares the determined current physical location of the authorized user's registered

- 5 mobile terminal 109 with the physical location of access terminal 101. If they match or are within a predetermined limited range of one another, access to the network resource or service 104 is granted to user 102 at access terminal 101. If they do not match, then access is denied.

The flowchart in FIG. 2 summarizes the steps of the above-described
10 procedure followed by the network security application or program in granting or denying access to a network resource or service. At step 201, an access request is received that includes the identity of the terminal from which the request is coming and the ID of the user attempting that access. At step 202 a determination is made whether the location of that identified terminal is
15 stored in an associated database. If not, at step 203, a location query is sent to that access terminal, and at step 204, a response to that location query is received. If there is a location stored in the database in association with that terminal identity then, at step 205, that stored location is retrieved. In parallel with step 202, at step 206, a location query is sent to the registered mobile
20 terminal that is associated with the provided user ID. At step 207, the location of the registered mobile terminal is received in response to that location query. At step 208, the location of the access terminal is compared with the location of the registered authorized user's mobile terminal. At step 209, a determination is made whether or not they are at the same location or within a

predetermined small range of one another. If they are, at step 210, access to the network resource or service is granted. If they are not, at step 211, access is denied.

- As described above, the user who is attempting access has inputted
- 5 both his ID and a PIN. If the access terminal is within a secured environment to which the user has already gained access via one or more security clearances and to which only a limited number of other users have access, then the user need not enter a PIN each time he wants to make an access attempt. Specifically, if the location of the mobile terminal associated with the
- 10 user is determined to be the location of such an access terminal within the secured environment, access can be granted without the additional authentication provided by the PIN.

- Although described in terms of a mobile terminal whose location is reported over a wireless network in response to a location query that is
- 15 received over the wireless network, in other embodiments any type of mobile terminal registered by and associated with and on or near the person of an authorized user can be used to report its current physical location. Such reporting need not be done in response to receiving a wireless location query, but could be incorporated as part of the process of accessing a network
- 20 resource or service from an access terminal. Thus, after he has provided his ID and PIN, the user could be requested by the network security program or application to send a message from his registered location-determining-enabled terminal to a specified address. That message would include the identity of the registered terminal as well as the current physical location of

that terminal. Thus, for example, if the user has registered his GPS-equipped PDA, the user could send a message from that PDA to the specified address, wherein the message includes the PDA's identity and its current location.

The network security program or application would then determine if the

- 5 message received at this address is from the user's registered device and compare its current physical location with the location of the access terminal in order to determine whether to grant or deny access the network resource or service that the user is desirous of reaching. In fact, any type of mobile terminal that can be registered and has the capability of sending its identity
- 10 and its current location to a specified location can be used.

While the particular invention has been described with reference to illustrative embodiments, this description is not meant to be construed in a limiting sense. It is understood that although the present invention has been described, various modifications of the illustrative embodiments, as well as

- 15 additional embodiments of the invention, will be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art upon reference to this description without departing from the spirit of the invention, as recited in the claims appended hereto.

Consequently, the method, system and portions thereof and of the described method and system may be implemented in different locations, such as the

- 20 wireless unit, the base station, a base station controller and/or mobile switching center. Moreover, processing circuitry required to implement and use the described system may be implemented in application specific integrated circuits, software-driven processing circuitry, firmware, programmable logic devices, hardware, discrete components or

arrangements of the above components as would be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art with the benefit of this disclosure. Those skilled in the art will readily recognize that these and various other modifications, arrangements and methods can be made to the present invention without

5 strictly following the exemplary applications illustrated and described herein and without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention. It is therefore contemplated that the appended claims will cover any such modifications or embodiments as fall within the true scope of the invention.

